



John L. Salomone
Town Manager

TOWN OF NEWINGTON

131 CEDAR STREET
NEWINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06111

MAYOR JEFF WRIGHT

MINUTES

CHARTER REVISION COMMISSION May 8, 2008

I CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Bafundo called the meeting to order at 6:32 PM in the Helen Nelson Room of the Newington Town Hall.

II PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present

Nancy Bafundo, Chair (left meeting at 6:45pm)
Tony Boni
Peter Boorman
Robert Briggaman
Alan Nafis

Staff Present

Tanya Lane – Town Clerk

IV PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Myra Cohen, 42 Jeffrey Lane: Mrs. Cohen commented that where Charter Section 408 refers to a referendum it should state that the number of affirmative votes required to pass is the same as stated in sections 410 and 411 and the end of the sentence in line five of Section 408 which states: "...approved by a majority of the qualified electors voting thereon at a regular election or special election called by the council for the purpose" should include the wording: "and such majority consists of ten percent or more of the total number of qualified electors of the Town." Mrs. Cohen noted that in the minutes of April 10, page 5, her comments regarding Sections 411 and 412 should read Sections 410 and 411 and on the third line of the same paragraph Section 412 should read Section 410. Mrs. Cohen addressed former Mayor Reynolds' comments during the March 27th Commission meeting regarding his reference to the Chamber of Commerce. She explained that there are residents that rent and therefore do not pay property tax, yet as residents they can vote on a budget referendum even though they don't pay property tax. She also noted that there are business people who own property in Newington but don't reside in Town and therefore cannot vote but are still an important part of the tax base. She stated that when the Council sets the budget it can consider concerns of the business community, but when a budget goes to referendum the non-resident business property owners have no say since they are not Newington voters which is why Mr. Reynolds stated that the budget referendum should be a concern of the Chamber of Commerce.

V MINUTES

A Regular Meeting, 3/27/08

Commissioner Boorman requested that the following verbatim comments made by Mayor Wright be entered into page 8, replacing the second bullet in the middle of the page of the 3/27/08 minutes in order to avoid accuracy issues or characterization issues regarding the conversation:

"I would also say that, you know, the majority of the folks that we appointed from the Republican side agree that there should be some type of budget referendum. So we, you know, we asked, just like there's opinions there and everything else, that you know what? We want people that have that same mind set and agree with the same type of philosophy." (so noted.)

Commissioner Briggaman moved to accept the minutes of the 3/27/08 meeting with the requested verbatim amendment and the amendments requested during Mrs. Cohen's public comment. Motion seconded by Commissioner Boni. Motion passed 5-0.

B Regular Meeting, 4/10/08

Commissioner Briggaman commented that the word "noting" on page 8, second line from the top should read "nothing". (so noted)

Commissioner Briggaman commented that according to the minutes of the 4/10/08 meeting he had suggested that the Commission maintain a log of any input from department heads and so forth and commented that the Commission should be sure to follow up on that suggestion and maintain the log.

Commissioner Boorman moved to accept the minutes of the 4/10/08 meeting with the requested amendment. Motion seconded by Commissioner Briggaman. Motion passed 5-0.

VI MATTERS TO BE CONSIDERED

A Dominic Mazzoccoli – Former Mayor

Commissioner Bafundo turned the chair of the meeting over to Commissioner Boni at 6:43pm and exited the meeting at 6:45pm.

Former Mayor Mazzoccoli addressed the Commission with his comments and suggestions relative to the Charter. Mr. Mazzoccoli stated that he supports the referendum approach to government. He stated that he favors a Town Meeting style of government in which people have a direct say in their government. He stated that he does understand that a referendum can cause problems and can be disruptive, but in general he feels that people today are more disenfranchised with government than ever before. Mr. Mazzoccoli stated that fundamentally people feel that they don't have a say in government whether it be at a local, state, or national level. He stated that even with a representative form of government it is very difficult to represent all of the wishes of the people. Mr. Mazzoccoli stated that if the Town moves in the direction of a referendum it will be critical that the process be managed effectively and that the proper controls are in place so that the process does not get out of hand. He stated that the Town's operation under a professional Town Manager has served the Town well. He stated that his philosophy has always been towards a more intrusive role for the elected officials in terms of how they handle their responsibilities to the public. He stated that whereas in some communities the Town Manager is the focal point and decision maker it should actually be the role of the elected official to be responsive to the public. He commented that the role of the Town Manager should be one of a professional service provider who manages based upon the policy direction of the Town Council. Mr. Mazzoccoli noted that the current threshold for budgetary items to go to referendum is rather low and stated that the Commission should consider the numbers and consider the impact on the taxpayers in regards to those numbers. He stated that this flies in the face of the budgetary referendum in which there is as much public input as possible.

He stated that this issue begs the question of how the Commission is going to handle the item whether it goes down the road of budget referendum versus keeping the current budget structure and keeping the thresholds. Mr. Mazzoccoli stated that Newington is a well-managed community with a very good reputation. He stated that while the Charter maintains the best interest of the people it is always a good idea to look at the operating procedures periodically to ensure that they are up to date. He stated agreement with former Mayor Reynolds' suggestion that the Town reviews the Charter every five years.

Question and answer session followed. Commissioner Boorman stated that the budget referendum is a big issue for the Commission and asked Mr. Mazzoccoli his opinions on situational aspects of the referendum. He asked whether Mr. Mazzoccoli is concerned with the possibility of a lack of participation in a budget referendum by the electors and asked whether there should be guidelines for the minimum number of electors required to participate in a referendum in order to make it effective. Mr. Mazzoccoli replied that there should be some sort of minimum threshold to prevent a group of very few people from dictating the outcome of a very large process. Commissioner Boorman asked if, for example, one thousand people show up to vote for a referendum whether Mr. Mazzoccoli would be concerned about the thousand people determining something as important as the budget, especially if the vote is close. Mr. Mazzoccoli replied that the thousand people who vote are more up to speed with the process and have considered the issues. He commented that he has the opposite concern in that too many people show up to vote who have not researched the budget and are not aware of the issues. He stated that it can go both ways. He stated that there are a core group of citizens who know what is going on and are going to participate no matter what. Commissioner Boorman asked whether Mr. Mazzoccoli is concerned about small groups grabbing the process by the horns and dictating the outcome due to a general lack of participation. Mr. Mazzoccoli replied that what is happening today is that there is a micromanaging of the voting process and it is becoming the small group of voters that are controlling the elections, even on a national level. Commissioner Boorman stated concern about a lack of voter turnout and public participation, noting former Mayor Mortensen's observations about a lack of public participation in the current budget process. He again expressed concerns about a smaller special interest group, for example: a group that wants to spend additional funds on education more than what is in the budget, and in effect hold the budget hostage because they want more money for their interest. Mr. Mazzoccoli stated that it is a fundamental issue of at what point do you decide who makes the decision; if the Town creates a democratic way of making a selection and only five people choose to exercise their right to vote then maybe it is those five people who should make the decision on the budget. He stated that if people are going to be lazy about exercising their right to vote then it should be left in the hands of the few who do choose to vote. He stated that the fact that people don't show up at budget meetings is a sign that the people have become disenfranchised. He stated that there is more participation in towns in which there is more of a sense of community and people feel like they have a say. He stated that as an elected official there are times when he feels out of control and disenfranchised by the system. Mr. Mazzoccoli stated that one of the most fundamental ways to give people a say is to let them pull the lever because that is where the control is and if someone decides not to vote then fundamentally they have no basis to object to the outcome. He stated that the referendum process does require some controls, as the process cannot bring the government to a standstill. He stated that the Town needs to build a framework, whether it is that there are a certain number of failures allowed or a certain percentage of voters needed. Commissioner Boorman noted a past speaker's recommendation that there be a definite limit on the number of referendums and if the budget does not pass then the Council will proceed to pass the budget with an increase cap of 3%. Mr. Mazzoccoli stated that he would use a cap based on a CPI index rather than a set 3% increase, as setting a fixed standard may be unrealistic. He stated that conceptually that kind of mechanism will provide the Town with a relief valve in the event of a failed referendum. Commissioner Boorman inquired about a situation in which the referendum ultimately fails and in which the 3% cap would not be sufficient to cover any new State or Federal mandates. Mr. Mazzoccoli replied that there would need to be adjustments, and although it can be painful it is the role of the professional to execute the will of the people. Commissioner Boorman asked if it would be executing the will of the people considering that the people had just turned down the budget. He also asked whether there is any mechanism of knowing what the people are really doing when they vote down a budget. He again asked what would happen if a turned down budget has to be passed with a cap and the cap is insufficient to deal with a mandate. Mr. Mazzoccoli stated that there would have to be cuts to the budget and noted that it is happening now in towns such as New Haven, Bridgeport and Berlin and noted that the State is moving into a deficit situation in which both parties have agreed not to reopen the budget. He stated that this is causing problems for municipalities.

Commissioner Boorman commented about representative democracy and noted that over the years Connecticut towns have moved away from Town Meetings over concerns about management and getting things accomplished. He asked Mr. Mazzoccoli his views regarding a Town Council that does not fulfill the will of the people and the fact that the Town has an election every two years to address that issue. He asked whether this addresses Mr. Mazzoccoli's concerns relative to democracy being a situation in which people don't feel disenfranchised because they can vote in a different party if they don't like what is going on. He stated that this is apparently what happened in the Town's last election. He asked whether this system works and why Mr. Mazzoccoli feels that it needs to be changed. Mr. Mazzoccoli replied that it comes down to a philosophical notion of government and that he favors the Town Meeting form of government because it brings back the roots of what government is about - control in the hands of the people. He stated that while the Town has a representative democracy it is part of the fundamental issue faced today of an ever-growing disenfranchised electorate and the question is how to turn that around. He stated that the idea is how the two parties can come together to respond to each other's needs while also thinking about the greater response to the public. Mr. Mazzoccoli stated that there is no easy answer to this issue. Commissioner Boorman asked whether Mr. Mazzoccoli feels that an election every two years is not enough of a cycle and that therefore an annual budget, even a budget with no contention, should be voted on. Mr. Mazzoccoli replied in the affirmative and commented that he has always felt that the public should be involved in voting on the budget. Commissioner Boorman asked whether this public involvement should be limited to the budget situation or should it be expanded to other issues that come before the Council. He noted Mr. Mazzoccoli's strong preference towards a Town Meeting style of government in which every individual that attends will have a say on all the issues before the Town. Mr. Mazzoccoli replied that he strongly feels that people should have a greater say and that they should exercise that say. He stated that it is about how today's complex issues are simplified so that people understand them and noted that the fact that people are frustrated has to send a message. Commissioner Boorman remarked that the voters sent a message in the last election. Mr. Mazzoccoli stated that it is a philosophical issue of the approach to government. He stated that it is not an administrative issue; rather it is a fundamental approach to how we govern. Commissioner Boorman asked how to determine the reason why a budget referendum passed or failed, and if it failed how to determine why it failed - whether it has been turned down because it is too high or too low or for other reasons. Mr. Mazzoccoli stated that the issues are usually flushed out prior to the vote and there is usually pretty good public debate about the issues. He stated that registering the opinion of each individual voter is something different. He noted that it is seen in businesses, people who are disenfranchised from the business because it did not do a good job marketing its services or gathering the needed input from its customers. He noted that increased communication is always good, but it has always been an issue of what information is put out to the public. He stated that feedback is provided, but it has usually been done through the newspaper and he stated that both the newspaper and the internet can be used as means of communication. Commissioner Boorman noted that there are legal issues with referendums in which the Town cannot take a position in newspapers, online, etc. Mr. Mazzoccoli stated that there are enough interest groups and that the people who are the most interested can have a definite say. He noted an example of a past situation with the management of the Indian Hill Golf Club. Commissioner Boorman stated that the Indian Hill issue is an interesting example because in that case there was a concerted effort by the powers that be at Indian Hill to actually spend money to publicize their point of view. He noted that the views of the Indian Hill management were the opposite of the views of Mr. Mazzoccoli and Mr. Randich, yet Indian Hill was successful in its views. Commissioner Boorman remarked that the example highlights his concern that a small, well-funded group will be able to sway people towards its views. Mr. Mazzoccoli agreed that it is a concern and noted that there are lobbying regulations at the State and Federal level but not as much at the local level.

Commissioner Briggaman asked Mr. Mazzoccoli his opinion on an automatic budget referendum versus a petitioned budget referendum. Mr. Mazzoccoli replied that the Commission would need to decide that route and asked whether the Charter currently provides for a petition. Commissioner Boorman stated that the current Charter does not provide for a petition. He stated that a petition puts the onus on a group to obtain the required number of signatures and asked why the Town should have to spend thousands of dollars on a referendum for a budget that has no issues. He stated that a petition can save the tax payers money by not creating a situation where none exists. Mr. Mazzoccoli agreed and stated that a petition would be a good approach if the Town is reluctant to extend an automatic referendum. Commissioner Boorman stated that in the current Charter the petition situation does not apply to the budget, but there is

an initiative procedure for other matters that can override the Council. He stated that the forefathers who created the Charter specifically excluded the budget issue from the referendum process. Mr. Mazzoccoli noted the example of California's very open and progressive process which has had success. Commissioner Boorman replied that California has pushed its propositions to the extreme which has caused difficulties for the administrations, particularly in budgetary issues during deficits and hard times. Mr. Mazzoccoli stated that the economy goes through cycles and remarked that the government is often poorly prepared for these cycles. He stated that Newington is one of the best-managed communities in the area and that it all comes down to fiscal planning. He stated that referendums have a way of turning things upside down, but at the same time they are a way of resetting things.

Commissioner Nafis noted a newspaper article regarding the Town of Berlin's budget referendum in which officials were disappointed with the voter turnout. He stated that there was a 15% turnout for the Berlin referendum and asked Mr. Mazzoccoli if he would be disappointed by a 15% turnout. Mr. Mazzoccoli replied that a 15% turnout is actually pretty good and would be an acceptable turnout. Commissioner Boorman asked whether the 15% turnout would be cause for concern about a smaller group dictating the outcome. Mr. Mazzoccoli replied that there is generally not a good voter turnout for local issues and off-election cycle referendums unless there is a hot issue involved. He stated that most people just don't understand money. Commissioner Boorman noted that the 15% turnout was out of the electorate of about 17,000 and again asked whether that number is of concern to Mr. Mazzoccoli. Mr. Mazzoccoli replied that there are only five people working on the Charter Commission and nine people on the Town Council. Commissioner Boorman stated that it is the job of the members of the Council to become educated about the budget and stated that the Councilors spend long hours doing so. Mr. Mazzoccoli stated that at the end of the day the public is smart enough and the people that show up to vote are those that are the most interested and the most informed. Commissioner Boorman asked whether that brings the issue full circle in that those who are most interested and who want to improve the Town could run for Town Council. Mr. Mazzoccoli stated that it gets down to the philosophical level of the role of democracy in that people can choose to exercise their rights or they can forfeit that choice to someone else. He stated that a true democracy is about people taking control of their government.

Commissioner Boni thanked Mr. Mazzoccoli for his time on behalf of the Commission.

B Frank Connolly – Former Town Manager

Former Town Manager Connolly addressed the Commission with his comments and suggestions relative to the Charter.

- Section 202 – Elected Officials, Board of Education: Mr. Connolly noted that it is interesting that there are not staggered terms for the Board of Education to provide for more continuity. He stated that there is not such a necessity for the Town Council but in his five and a half year experience as a school business manager working for a Board of Education he has learned that staggered terms are important to provide continuity due to the incredibly complex issues that Board members must learn to deal with. Commissioner Nafis asked whether Mr. Connolly is speaking of four-year staggered terms. Mr. Connolly replied in the affirmative.
- Section 303(A)(3) – Clerk of the Council: Mr. Connolly noted that the last sentence reads: "*the Clerk shall serve to the term of the Mayor*" and noted that with that language the Clerk, in effect, cannot be removed.
- Section 501 – Town Manager: Mr. Connolly noted Charter language that reads: "*At the time of the appointment the Manager need not be a resident of the Town or State but while in office shall reside within the Town within a period of no more than six months*" and commented that the six month time period is an unrealistically short period of time given today's environment, and twelve months would be a more realistic period of time. He noted that some towns are even considering not requiring residency by the Town Manager. He stated that the issue can be argued either way as not requiring residency could increase applications for the position, but on the other hand a Town Manager that lives in town becomes part of the community. Mr. Connolly stated that the towns he has served as Town Manager have always had residency requirements and it is the accepted norm to require the residency of the Town Manager. He again stated that the six month requirement is a very short period of time to expect a person to relocate.

- Section 611 – Town Planner: Mr. Connolly noted that the current Town Planner, Ed Meehan, was appointed during his term as Town Manager and that during the process he went to the Council and highly recommended Mr. Meehan for the position. Mr. Connolly remarked that he does not know why the Town Manager does not appoint the Town Planner as the Planner is a professional department head and he remarked that he does not understand why the position is the appointment of the Town Council rather than the Town Manager.
- Section 708(C) – Department of Finance, Revenue Collector: Mr. Connolly stated that he does not understand the requirement that the Revenue Collector be an elector of the Town. He stated that the Revenue Collectors of today's world are highly specialized, certified professionals and to require a Revenue Collector to move to Town is unusual. He stated that there are no residency requirements for the Superintendent, the Police Chief or various department heads.
- Section 805 – Duties of the Council on the Budget: Mr. Connolly stated that he has worked in towns with a Town Meeting, towns with a Town Meeting and an automatic petition for referendum and towns in which the Council is in charge of the budget. He remarked that referendums don't vote on budgets, they vote against taxes, and that most people who vote at a referendum are voting on a tax rate rather than what's in the budget. Mr. Connolly stated that most people don't understand the dynamics of a budget. He stated that he has found that when a Town Meeting form of government is petitioned towards a referendum or has an automatic referendum it defangs the Town Meeting and reduces the dialogue and participation at the Town Meeting. He stated that if Newington is going to have a referendum it needs to have a cutoff point, noting his experience with a town that did not have a cutoff point and had multiple failed referenda that resulted in the town operating without a budget on July 1. He stated that not having a budget as of July 1 is a financial disaster because the town is actually borrowing money and paying interest rather than collecting taxes. He stated that if the policy decision is to go with a budget referendum there needs to be a cutoff point, whatever it may be, to bring the budgetary process to a conclusion. Mr. Connolly remarked that the budgetary process actually takes twenty-four months: six months to prepare the budget, twelve months to spend the budget and six months to make sure the budget was spent properly, and that a referendum without a cap will create hardships for the Town. Mr. Connolly stated that there can be exit interviews to determine how people feel about a referendum and that technology, including online survey devices such as Survey Monkey, can be utilized easily and inexpensively to gather opinions. Mr. Connolly spoke about the issue of whether to separate the vote on the Town's budget from the vote on the Board of Education's budget. He stated that the separation is now allowed due to a decision by the State Supreme Court and stated that he prefers the idea of one budget vote as he has found that the political muscle of getting the budget passed in a Town Meeting or referendum lies heavily with the Board of Education. He stated that there is not a constituency for the Town Clerk, Zoning Enforcement, Building Official, etc. and found that the votes and the political force in passing budgets are on the Board of Education side. Commissioner Boorman asked Mr. Connolly to expound on the term "political force" in regards to the Board of Education's budgets. Mr. Connolly explained that the term basically refers to getting warm bodies out to vote and it is the Board of Education that will get the people out to support its budget. Commissioner Boorman inquired whether this includes the fact that *maybe that politicizes the whole thing*, and inquired *if it is almost like starting a machine to get one point of view mobilized to make sure it either passes or fails depending on what the point of view is, and does it start this whole other political thing*. Mr. Connolly replied that if there is a referendum and the parents know that the Board of Education is going to take a big hit if the budget fails then there will be a lot of incentive for parents to get out and support that budget. He stated that there is no constituency for other departments such as the Building Department but there is a vested constituency with people with children in the school system. Commissioner Briggaman asked whether the same interest would exist if the budget votes are separated. Mr. Connolly asked what would happen with the Town budget if the separate Board of Education budget passes. Commissioner Briggaman replied that the Town budget would either pass or fail. Commissioner Boorman noted that the two budgets could be voted on at the same time and one could pass and one could fail. Commissioner Briggaman stated that the force would still be evident if the budgets are separated. Commissioner Nafis stated that the education force would not necessarily vote on the Town side of the budget. Mr. Connolly stated that the education force may actually vote against the Town side of the budget in order to support the education side of the budget, and that the Town cannot

have a budget until both sides pass. He stated another issue regarding budget referendums is the cost to have the referendum.

- Section 8-12: Borrowing in Anticipation of Taxes: Mr. Connolly noted that the Charter states that "*The Council may borrow money in anticipation of collection of taxes*" and stated that the Town really needs to have the budget in place in order to set the mill rate by the beginning of June at the latest in order to give the Tax Collector time to prepare the tax bills. He stated that borrowing money gets very expensive very quickly because in addition to having to borrow funds the Town will lose interest income by not collecting taxes on July 1. He stated that the collection of taxes on July 1 and January 1 is good because not all of the funds collected are needed immediately. He stated that some of the funds collected on July 1 are invested and the second batch of funds collected on January 1 carries the Town through the fiscal year.
- Section 8-14: Competitive Bidding: Mr. Connolly asked whether Newington piggybacks on State contracts. Commissioner Boorman replied in the affirmative.

Mr. Connolly stated that Newington's Charter is a good, strong Charter. He stated that a Town Meeting form of government is based entirely on distrust, but the Council-Manager form of government is designed to provide for addressing the issues of government in a more businesslike fashion. He stated that Newington's Charter vests a lot of power in the Town Council and the Town Manager and includes the necessary checks and balances. Mr. Connolly stated that the Town should not perform a Charter revision every five years since it takes *two years to get through the process*. He stated that some towns have revisions every ten years, and some do it as needed. Commissioner Nafis stated that it had been suggested by one of the speakers that if a referendum is put into the Charter and the Town does not like the referendum it could be done away with in two years. Mr. Connolly stated that two years would be too quick and explained that State statutes intentionally make Charter revision a very laborious and time consuming process to prevent towns from flip-flopping and changing frequently. Mr. Connolly also noted that he found the previous discussion about the 15% voter turnout in Berlin interesting because in effect, under the Charter revision statutes the Charter can be revised in a special election with 15% affirmative votes, not a 15% voter turnout. Commissioner Boorman stated that he is surprised that 15% would be considered a sufficient number for total voter participation, and considering the size of the Town there would actually be a very small number of people voting which in his opinion would not be representative of the Town. He stated that if the Town is going to have a budget referendum it must have some sort of mechanism that prevents *a dictatorship of minority coming in*. Mr. Connolly replied that there typically is not a large turnout for a special election, and noted his study that found that less than one percent of the total voting population typically turns out at Town Meetings, and noted an example in his study in which more people turned out at a meeting to determine the name of a high school than turned out to appropriate the funds for the high school. Commissioner Nafis stated that there is always a concern with a referendum in that there would be more emotional votes and that people would be voting on the mill rate rather than what goes into the budget.

Commissioner Nafis noted Mr. Connolly's suggestion for staggered terms for the Board of Education and inquired about how the minority representation required on the Board would be preserved with staggered terms. Mr. Connolly replied that it is possible that a vote-getter could get more votes than another candidate but not get on the Board. Commissioner Briggaman noted that currently nine candidates run for the Board of Education which virtually assures that a candidate will be elected with eight of the nine candidates getting onto the Board and asked Mr. Connolly how he would change that in order to make it a fairer system. Mr. Connolly noted a gentleman by the name of Marvin Gates who made the point that if there are ten candidates for nine positions is it really an election or is it in effect the Town Committees that elect the people rather than the electors at large? He stated that more candidates make it more of a race. Commissioner Nafis stated that with staggered terms there could be any number of people running for the available seats and there would not necessarily have to be a restriction on the number of candidates from each party since it would be possible to gather a higher number of votes but not be elected. He stated that this might open up the possibility of more candidates. Mr. Connolly noted that it may be just a gentlemen's agreement between the parties to only put up five candidates from each party. Commissioner Nafis stated that it might be in the State statutes.

Commissioner Boni thanked Mr. Connolly for his time on behalf of the Commission.

VII ANY OTHER BUSINESS PERTINENT TO THIS COMMISSION

Commissioner Nafis asked whether there are any speakers lined up for the next meeting. Ms. Lane replied that she is not aware of any speakers being lined up for the next agenda. Commissioner Boorman asked for Ms. Lane to fill the Commission in on the status of the support person while Ms. Amodeo is on medical leave. Ms. Lane replied that she has emailed Ms. Amodeo to inform her that she will be her placeholder on the Commission but has not yet received a reply. She stated that she will reach out to Ms. Amodeo about the scheduling. Commissioner Boorman stated that Ms. Amodeo has kept an ongoing schedule of speakers and requested that Ms. Lane advise the Chairperson if there are not any further speakers in place for future meetings. He also requested that Ms. Lane feel free to ask the Commissioners if there is anything that they can do to make the process easier for her. Ms. Lane stated that her role as she understands it is to do research and provide information for the Commission and stated that she is happy to do anything to facilitate the Commission. Commissioner Boorman stated that the staff person has been facilitating the speakers for the Commission and once that part of the process is done the support will likely involve paperwork and the issues of reprints, etc. He stated that the Commission is currently in the fact-finding phase and the speakers are very important to the Commission in order to gather as much information as possible. Ms. Lane stated that she will reach out to Ms. Amodeo and get back to the Commission with the information.

VIII WRITTEN COMMUNICATION FROM THE PUBLIC

Commissioner Boni read a typed letter, received via mail at the Town Hall, addressed to Commissioner Bafundo and members of the Charter Revision Commission:

April 24, 2008

Nancy Bafundo and members of the Charter Revision Committee:

I am writing this letter in support of the requests of the officers and members of the Newington Fire Department for the elimination of the Board of Fire Commissioners. In my opinion this is a justified request. The Board is not a component to the proper operation of the Fire Department. In the Town Charter, under Section 202(B) Board of Fire Commissioners there is a listing of duties and requirements of the Board. Some years ago these same requirements and responsibilities were handed to the Chief to fulfill those same duties. My question: what is the need and the cost of maintaining a Board of Fire Commissioners? I would like to inform your Committee this is not the first request. During my tenure as Chief of the Fire Department, myself, my chief officers and the backing of a large portion of the membership presented the same argument to the 1985 Charter Revision Committee. Much to our disappointment we were turned down. With our 1985 request the present Fire Department requested, at a cost of almost \$30,000, by the consulting firm M.M.A in May of 2003 with the same recommendation with the problem of recruiting, retention, morale. With a large majority of firefighters of favor I feel that your Committee should have no other conclusion than to accept the opinion of many rather than of few. We must maintain morale and reliability and most of all a volunteer fire department. Your consideration will be appreciated.

Chief Joseph J. Kalasky, Retired

cc Mayor Jeffrey Wright and Members of the Council

Commissioner Boorman stated that the letter is interesting because the Commission had requested input on this issue. He thanked Mr. Kalasky for sending the letter and invited him in to speak to the Commission in more detail. Commissioner Boorman stated that the topic is of keen interest to him because he'd like to understand the rank and file's attitude which will be important to him in terms of the Commission's recommendation to the Council. He noted that he would be interested in hearing more about Mr. Kalasky's comments about supporting the majority rather than the minority and requested members of the Fire Department community to provide their opinions, pros and cons about the issue. Commissioner Boni agreed and stated that anything that jeopardizes having a volunteer Fire Department in Town is very important. Commissioner Briggaman suggested that Mr. Kalasky be invited to address the Commission. Commissioner Boorman agreed.

IX PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Myra Cohen, 42 Jeffrey Lane: Mrs. Cohen commented about various speakers' previous comments about the length of time since the last Charter revision. She stated that when Keith Chapman was the Town Manager he surveyed the department heads and asked each department head what they felt needed to be changed in the Charter. She stated that some of the suggestions included some obvious items, but there were no rumbles at all from the public. She stated that the conclusion was that the suggestions that were made, while needed, were relatively few and it was deemed that the Charter revision process was not necessary at the time and that the items identified for revision could be lived with for the time being. Commissioner Boorman commented that the situation speaks about the good quality of the Charter. Mrs. Cohen stated that she feels that Newington has one of the best Charters. Commissioner Boni agreed with Mrs. Cohen's statements and recalled that there were not enough changes needed under Mr. Chapman's survey to open the Charter formally at the time.

X COMMENTS BY COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Briggaman commented that the evening's speakers were very enlightening.

XI ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Briggaman moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:00pm. Motion seconded by Commissioner Nafis.

Motion passed 4-0 (Commissioner Bafundo absent).

Respectfully Submitted,

Mrs. Jaime Trevethan
Clerk – Charter Revision Commission